

**WE NEED NEVER
BE ASHAMED OF OUR TEARS.**
—Charles Dickens,
Great Expectations

Unit 2—Lesson 3

Charles Dickens

INTRODUCTION

Charles Dickens was born in 1812, and his earliest life was quite happy. His father worked as a pay clerk for the British navy in Portsmouth. However, by the time Dickens was twelve years old, his father was in debt. At the time, people who could not pay their debts were put in prison where they (and their family) worked to pay off those debts. Whole families would often move into the debtor's prison together. Charles Dickens got a job in a blacking warehouse (putting blacking on shoes) in order to earn money for his family. This was a miserable time of his life, and much of the misery through which his later fictional characters lived was based more or less on this time of Dickens' life. The most accurate description of this time to appear in Dickens' fiction is found in the early chapters of *David Copperfield*.

Dickens did not have to spend too much time in the blacking warehouse. He soon got a job as an office boy where he learned to write in shorthand.

He was then able to use that skill to become a reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*. He would write down the debates in the House of Commons in the Parliament. He also started writing creatively at about this time, publishing a series of articles in the *Monthly Magazine*, the *Evening Chronicle*, and a number of other periodicals. These articles were written from 1833 to 1835 and were collected and published as *Sketches by 'Boz,' Illustrative of Every-Day Life and Every-Day People* in 1837. "Boz" was Dickens' *nom de plume* when he wrote those articles.

The *Sketches* were very popular; and Chapman and Hall, a prominent publisher, approached Dickens for more work.

**No one is
useless in this world
who lightens the
burdens of another.**
—Charles Dickens

Most of Charles Dickens' work was published in serialized form. This meant that one chapter would appear each week or each month, depending on the magazine in which it was being published. Once the entire story had appeared in this way, the chapters would

be collected and published in book form. Dickens' first work, which was planned as a novel, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (often called *The Pickwick Papers*), were published in twenty monthly installments beginning in April of 1836. In 1837, the magazine *Bentley's Miscellany*, a publication for which Dickens himself worked, began to publish *Oliver Twist* in monthly installments. When *Oliver Twist* was completed, *Nicholas Nickleby* was also published monthly. In 1840, Dickens started his own weekly magazine called *Master Humphrey's Clock*. Here he published both short works as well as novels in installments. *The Old Curiosity Shop* appeared from 1840 to 1841, and *Barnaby Rudge* appeared in this magazine in 1841.

In 1842, Charles Dickens and his wife, Catherine Hogarth Dickens, visited the United States. He was already very popular in America and was met with great acclaim. His first impressions of the United States were very positive, but he came to recognize some flaws. Much of Dickens' complaint about the United States involved slavery, and he began to campaign strenuously for its abolition. He published *American Notes* in 1842, which caused some offense. There was more offense taken over the American characters in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which was published in 1843 and 1844.

Though *Martin Chuzzlewit* was poorly received, Dickens redeemed his popularity with *A Christmas Carol*, published in 1843. This was the first of a series of Christmas stories (including *The Chimes*, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, *The Battle of Life*, and *The Haunted Man*), which Dickens published over several years at Christmastime.

In addition to *Master Humphrey's Clock*, Dickens owned a series of periodicals in which he published his works. These included the *Daily News*, *Household Words*, and *All the Year Round*. The novel *Dombey and Son* was published in 1848, *David Copperfield* was published monthly in 1849–50, *Bleak House* in 1852–53, *A Child's History of England* occasionally from 1851 to 1853, *Hard Times* in 1854, *Little Dorit* in 1855–57, *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859, *Great Expectations* in 1860–61, and *Our Mutual Friend* in 1864–65. Much of his time when not writing was spent giving readings of his works. In 1870, when Dickens died, he left *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* unfinished.

**Annual income twenty
pounds, annual expenditure
nineteen six, result happiness.
Annual income twenty pounds,
annual expenditure twenty pounds
ought and six, result misery.
—Charles Dickens,
*David Copperfield***

THE SELECTION

To say that *Great Expectations* is a “typical Dickens book” would be to sell it somewhat short. However, it does contain certain elements that appear in many of Dickens’ works and will be familiar if you have read anything else by Charles Dickens. The setting, though somewhat earlier than most of the author’s works, is still a Great Britain struggling with the effects of the Industrial Revolution. This book is set in the earliest years of the nineteenth century and, therefore, is not—strictly speaking—Victorian. However, it does contain a tone typical of many Victorian novels: it recognizes the need for social reform. Throughout, Pip, the main character, struggles with materialism and too much concern with social class.

WHILE YOU READ

Here are some questions to keep in the back of your mind while reading *Great Expectations*.

- What conflicts does Pip face?
- How well does he face these conflicts?
- How are these conflicts resolved?
- Are the conflicts that affect other characters the same as, or different than, the ones Pip must deal with?



LESSON PREVIEW

***Conflict* refers to the challenges and problems that characters must face. There are four main types of conflict, and we will analyze them in this lesson.**



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

CHAPTERS 1–2

1. What is Pip's real name?
2. How many of Pip's brothers had not survived?
3. Who is raising Pip?
4. Whom does Pip meet in the churchyard?
5. What is the meaning of *wittles*, which that person asks for?
6. How does the person Pip meets in the churchyard threaten him to make sure he does what he has been told?
7. What joke does the narrator make concerning the phrase "raised by hand," which was used to describe the way Pip's sister took care of him?
8. Are Mrs. Joe Gargery and Mr. Joe Gargery very similar? How do they differ?
9. What is the first piece of food Pip collects?
10. What medical treatment is he given when Mrs. Joe thinks he has eaten his food too quickly?
11. What are the ships out on the river near Pip's house?
12. Where does Pip get the provisions for the man he met?

CHAPTERS 3–6

1. What is the state of the weather in the morning that makes it difficult for Pip to find the convict?
2. Who is the first person Pip meets, and who does he think it is?
3. What day is it when Pip brings the provisions to the convict?
4. Who visits the Gargerys for dinner on this special day?
5. What seems to be Pip's main emotion all day?
6. Who comes to the house immediately after dinner?
7. What do these new visitors want?
8. Where do Mr. Joe and Pip go with these newest arrivals?
9. Are they successful in their quest?
10. What is the situation the soldiers and the onlookers come upon?
11. What seems to be the past situation between the two men the soldiers find?
12. What confession does Pip's convict make just before he is taken back to the prison ship?

CHAPTERS 7–8

1. Who runs the "school" (if it can be called that) that Pip attends?
2. Who helps with the school and some with Pip learning the alphabet, and what is her relation to the teacher?

3. What story does Joe tell Pip about his own childhood, and how does it explain Joe's relationship with Mrs. Joe?
4. What news do Mrs. Joe and Mr. Pumblechook bring when they return from the market?
5. Who meets Mr. Pumblechook and Pip at the door of Miss Havisham's house?
6. What is the name of Miss Havisham's house, and what does it mean?
7. What is Miss Havisham wearing?
8. What does she order Pip to do that he is unable to do?
9. What does Miss Havisham urge Estella to do?
10. What are the three things that Estella particularly mentions in making fun of Pip?
11. What vision of Miss Havisham does Pip have on that first day he visits?
12. Does Estella make Pip cry?
13. Whom does Pip seem to blame for the faults Estella accuses him of having?

CHAPTERS 9–11

1. Why does Pip lie to Mrs. Joe and Mr. Pumblechook about what Miss Havisham had been like and what they had done there?
2. What were a couple of aspects of Pip's lie about the hours spent with Miss Havisham and Estella?
3. A couple of days after his first visit to Miss Havisham, what does Pip ask Biddy to help him with?
4. Considering the way Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt normally runs the school, does it seem that Pip will learn anything in the class?
5. Whom does Pip meet at the Three Jolly Bargemen?
6. What action on the part of this man in disguise reveals something about his identity to Pip?
7. Does anyone else recognize the man who is talking to Mr. Joe and Mr. Wopsle?
8. What does this man give Pip as they are leaving?
9. Who else is visiting Miss Havisham when Pip arrives for his second visit?
10. What room does Miss Havisham bring Pip into, and what piece of food in that room is covered with cobwebs?
11. What do they do there?
12. What other person does Pip meet when he is wandering around the garden eating his meal, and what do they do?
13. What offer does Estella make Pip after his encounter with the other boy?

CHAPTERS 12–15

1. What new task is Pip given in future visits to Miss Havisham's house?
2. After about eight or ten months, what does Miss Havisham propose that Pip go ahead and do, something for which he has been planning?
3. Does Mrs. Joe seem happy about Miss Havisham's offer? Why do you think she reacts the way she does?
4. Does Pip seem proud to be accompanied by Mr. Joe to Miss Havisham's to receive her blessing on his apprenticeship?
5. Why does Joe keep responding to Pip when Miss Havisham is the one asking the questions?
6. What gift does Miss Havisham give Pip and his family to mark the beginning of the apprenticeship?
7. Of what new feeling does Pip become aware when he begins his apprenticeship?
8. Does the narrator, a much older Pip, seem to be proud that he had felt this feeling when he was young?
9. Whom does Pip long to see approximately a year after his apprenticeship has begun?
10. Besides Pip, who else works for Joe, and what is that person's position?
11. Is Miss Havisham kind and warm to Pip when he visits?
12. What does Pip learn about Estella during his visit to Miss Havisham?
13. What happens to Mrs. Joe while Pip is out visiting Miss Havisham and then spending the evening with Mr. Wopsle and Mr. Pumblechook?

CHAPTERS 16–19

1. What instrument was Mrs. Joe attacked with?
2. What is the effect on Mrs. Joe of this attack? What are her ongoing health problems?
3. Who comes to live with the Gargerys to help with Mrs. Joe?
4. How do Pip's feelings for, or opinions about, Biddy change?
5. What does Pip tell Biddy about his goals in life, and what is her response?
6. Whom does Pip meet at the Three Jolly Bargemen? Where has he seen this person previously?
7. What amazing news does this man have for Pip?
8. What two rules does the lawyer explain to Pip concerning receiving the money?
9. Why does Pip think his benefactor is Miss Havisham?
10. What effect does this news seem to have on Pip's feelings for Biddy, Joe, and his life?
11. What favor does Pip ask of Biddy concerning Joe?
12. What does Pip learn concerning the treatment he receives from the merchants and storeowners in town? What changes come over Mr. Pumblechook?
13. To whom is Pip careful to say good-bye before leaving for London?

CHAPTERS 20–25

1. What observations does Pip make concerning London?
2. What observations does Pip make concerning how people treat Mr. Jaggers?
3. What idea about Mr. Jaggers are we supposed to get from the description of how he treats those around him?
4. Who will be Pip's companion? Where has Pip met this person before?
5. How does the narrator describe the character of Pip's companion?
6. What story does Herbert Pocket tell Pip about why Miss Havisham lives the way she does?
7. How are the Pockets treated by their servants?
8. How many other young men are boarding with the Pockets and being taught by Mr. Pocket?
9. What seems to be the chief concern of Mrs. Pocket?
10. In what two places does Pip choose to live?
11. What are the two sculptures that Pip notices on his first visit to Mr. Jaggers' office?
12. What fact does Mr. Wemmick, Mr. Jaggers' chief clerk, tell Pip about the way Mr. Jaggers lives that proves how much everyone is intimidated by him?
13. List a couple of the peculiar facts about Mr. Wemmick's house.

CHAPTERS 26–29

1. After having dinner at Wemmick's house, at whose house does Pip dine next?
2. Who joins him for dinner on this occasion?
3. What feature of his housekeeper does Mr. Jaggers point out to his guests?
4. In which of his guests does Mr. Jaggers seem most interested?
5. From whom does Pip receive a letter in chapter 27?
6. Who are two people visiting London?
7. How does Pip seem to feel about Joe?
8. How does Joe indicate that he feels there is a difference in his relationship with Pip?
9. Whom does Pip see in the carriage he takes down to his village the next day?
10. Who does Pip learn has been spreading about town that he is Pip's best friend and also responsible for Pip's rise in fortune?
11. Whom does Pip find working for Miss Havisham when he goes for his visit?
12. What does Pip think of Estella after not seeing her for so long?
13. What does Miss Havisham urge Pip to do concerning Estella?
14. What does Pip think is Miss Havisham's ultimate goal concerning Estella?

CHAPTERS 30–35

1. What steps does Pip take concerning Orlick working for Miss Havisham?
2. Whom does Pip meet on his way out of town, and what does that person do to make him angry?
3. What topic do Pip and Herbert talk about when Pip returns to London?
4. Where do Pip and Herbert go the night Pip returns to London, and whom do they see there?
5. What play do they see, and how is it received by the audience?
6. What is Mr. Wopsle’s opinion of the show?
7. From whom does Pip receive a letter in chapter 32, and what announcement does it bring?
8. Where does Pip go with Wemmick while he is waiting for the carriage?
9. Who does Pip learn are trying to convince Miss Havisham that he is not a good person, and how well are they doing in their intentions?
10. What is the paradoxical result of Pip having so much money when he used to have none? What is the effect of this money on Herbert?
11. Whose funeral does Pip attend in chapter 35?
12. How does the relationship between Pip and Biddy seem when Pip visits for the funeral?
13. What accusation does Biddy make concerning Pip and Joe?

CHAPTERS 36–41

1. What news concerning his money does Pip receive from Mr. Jaggers on the day of his “majority” (his 21st birthday)?
2. What news had he hoped to receive on this occasion?
3. What plan does Pip begin to work on concerning Herbert after receiving his birthday present?
4. What is the main complaint that Miss Havisham makes against Estella in the one argument Pip witnesses between them, and what is Estella’s response?
5. What is the cause over which Pip and Drummle almost fight a duel?
6. What type of activity does Pip complain about to Estella, especially at the party they attend?
7. When Pip is 23 years old, who visits him?
8. What news does this person have for Pip?
9. How does Pip take this news? What are the two main problems Pip has with this news?
10. What additional mysterious circumstance the night Pip’s has a visitor worries Pip?
11. What two precautions does Pip take to try to prevent danger coming to his visitor?
12. Does Mr. Jaggers confirm the news Pip has received?
13. What is Herbert’s advice to Pip as to what must be done with this visitor?

CHAPTERS 42–47

1. What does Magwitch say about his childhood and the earliest stages of his life of crime?
2. What connection between Magwitch and Miss Havisham do we learn about?
3. Whom does Pip meet in the inn when he visits Miss Havisham the day after his guest arrives?
4. How do Pip and the other man express their feelings for each other in the coffee room of the Blue Boar?
5. For what two favors does Pip ask Miss Havisham in relation to the Pocket family?
6. What does Pip learn Estella is about to do, and what does Pip say to Estella on this occasion?
7. Does it seem that Miss Havisham is affected at all by this conversation?
8. Whose note does Pip find when he returns home to London the night after meeting with Miss Havisham and Estella, and what does it say?
9. What reason does the writer of the note give the next day for sending it?
10. What did Herbert decide to do about Magwitch when he received a warning from Wemmick?
11. What plan for getting Magwitch permanently safe somewhere do Pip and Herbert come up with?
12. While Magwitch is in hiding, Pip goes to the theater. Whom does he see there?
13. What strange piece of news does this person give Pip?

CHAPTERS 48–53

1. What relation does Pip recognize when he dines with Mr. Jaggers and Mr. Wemmick?
2. What story does Mr. Wemmick tell Pip concerning Mr. Jaggers' housekeeper?
3. What does Miss Havisham agree to do regarding Herbert when Pip visits her the next day?
4. What seem to be her feelings now for Pip?
5. What facts concerning Estella does Miss Havisham confirm during this visit?
6. What tragedy befalls Miss Havisham during this visit?
7. What happens to Pip as a result of this tragedy?
8. What part of the story is Herbert able to fill in for Pip while he is redressing Pip's wounds?
9. Did Mr. Jaggers know who Estella's father was?
10. What note does Pip receive from Wemmick a few days or more after he had confirmed Estella's story?
11. What other mysterious note does Pip receive that evening?
12. Who sent this note? What does Pip learn about his intentions and his reasons?
13. What confession does this person make to Pip?
14. Who saves Pip from these intentions?

CHAPTERS 54–56

1. Who is involved in trying to get Magwitch out of the country?
2. What is the basic plan?
3. What happens when Magwitch and his friends are about to meet the steamers?
4. Who is accompanying the authorities?
5. What happens to Magwitch and his accuser?
6. Is there much that can be done for Magwitch in court?
7. What event does Mr. Wemmick trick Pip into attending?
8. What eventually causes Magwitch's death?
9. What secret does Pip share with Magwitch just before he dies?

CHAPTERS 57–59

1. What is the state of Pip's health immediately after Magwitch's death?
2. What visitors does he have first?
3. Who later comes to visit him and nursemaid him?
4. How is the relationship between Pip and this person while he remains very sick?
5. What changes occur in this relationship as Pip gets stronger?
6. What plan does Pip have for himself and Biddy?
7. What news does Pip receive from Joe and Biddy when he arrives in his village?
8. What are his feelings about this news after the shock wears off?
9. Where does Pip decide to go when he leaves his village?
10. Which of the two alternate endings do you like most? Why?

LITERARY LESSON: CONFLICT

Conflict is the general term for all of the problems and challenges a character faces in the course of a story. Conflict is vital to every story. It is through conflict, through seeing what the characters deal with—and usually triumph over in some way—that we readers learn to care about the characters. And it is the conflict that provides most of the interest in the story. Finding out how these characters that we have learned to care about get out of the troubles they have gotten into keeps us turning the pages.

There are really just a few basic types of conflict. It may seem odd, but every conflict you can think of or that you have read about will fit in one or more of just four types of conflict: (1) conflict with nature, (2) conflict with another character, (3) conflict with society at large, and (4) internal conflict (the conflict of a character against himself or herself). It is also the case that most novels (though this is less true in shorter works) contain two or more types of conflict. Our discussion of conflict will focus on the conflicts that occur in *Great Expectations*.

Character Against Nature

Conflict with nature does not play a major part in *Great Expectations*, but Pip and other characters did have to deal with the natural world on a few occasions. For example, when Pip is trying to deliver the food to “his” convict, he must stumble through the heavy fog, which had arisen over the marshes near his home. He does finally find his way to the agreed-upon rendezvous site, but only after having been off course for a while. And this misdirection actually plays an important part in this story. It is because he is in a different area than he meant to be in that he meets the other convict, Compeyson, and this leads to the physical conflict between Compeyson and Magwitch in the ditch.

In another couple of incidents, Pip is not able to row back up the Thames to his apartment in the Temple because the tide has gone out, and the bridge formed a barrier across the river. Again, these struggles with nature lead to important incidents in the plot. What’s more, these incidents lead to important meetings, such as when Pip meets Mr. Wopsle who is able to tell him that he is being followed by Compeyson. In the other incident, Pip runs into Mr. Jaggers and sees Jaggers’ housekeeper in a new light.

These are not serious conflicts with nature. They do not form the core of the conflict in *Great Expectations*. Books you may have read or have heard of that are focused on this sort of conflict include *The Call of the Wild* and *Robinson Crusoe*.

Character Against Character

There are many examples of this type of conflict in *Great Expectations*. The earliest character-to-character conflict to which we are introduced is the tense relationship between Pip and his sister, Mrs. Joe. She is strict, and seemingly not terribly sympathetic. This

relationship involves both physical and mental conflict. She beats and punishes Pip, often using a switch called “Tickler.” She accuses him of a variety of crimes. We see Mrs. Joe has a conflict with Joe as well.

Pip also has many conflicts with other characters in his early life. He does not seem to get along well with any of the adults in the village. They abuse him in other ways than by beating him. They accuse him of having a variety of moral shortcomings, especially of being unappreciative of all that Mrs. Joe does for him. Another very early conflict is the relationship between Pip and the convict out on the marshes. This convict, whom we later get to know very well, scares Pip and threatens him. In doing this, he forces Pip to bring him some food.

The key nonphysical conflicts that Pip experiences are with Miss Havisham and Estella. Both of these characters abuse Pip in a variety of nonphysical ways. Miss Havisham scares him and induces Estella to make fun of him, tease him, and lead him on. And, of course, Estella does these things, making Pip quite miserable for many years. (One might also argue that Estella is not the only one to blame. She warns him that she does not care for him and that he is only going to be hurt if he continues to hope for something more. He acknowledges this many times. This might be called “character against himself,” and we will talk about that possibility later.)

And there is one more major physical conflict toward the end of the book. This is the attack that Orlick makes on Pip after luring him back to the marshes of his childhood. This is a very serious attack and could have led to Pip’s death.

But the main character is not the only character who gets involved in conflicts. A key conflict throughout the book is the one between Magwitch and Compeyson. It is because of their relationship that Magwitch was exiled, and it is that conflict that ultimately leads to their deaths. Compeyson’s conflict with Miss Havisham turned her into what she became and made Estella what she was as well. How many other conflicts between individual characters did you notice while reading *Great Expectations*?

Character Against Society

Sometimes characters face troubles that are not in the natural world or with individual people, but with the world at large. These conflicts can also be described as conflicts with society. There are some conflicts that fall into this category in this story. In fact, the main conflict might be called a conflict with society. Pip is a member of a fairly poor, rural family. In the society in which he lives (and actually in most societies), movement from one social class to another is very difficult. Pip dreams of making that change when he meets Estella. She is a member of a higher class and, therefore, separated from any of Pip’s dreams in an almost insurmountable way. Then he is given a lot of money from a mysterious source. With money, his class changes. The class system no longer separates him from Estella, but they are still separate.

And there is a more fundamental effect of this class system on the major characters in this book. We see that Pip's rise in society is quite detrimental to the quality of his character. He forgets or devalues the friendship he enjoyed with Joe, his adoptive father. The love of money, and the related love of social position, are the root of evil in Pip's character. It is only when he finally loses that money and his higher social status that he learns again the importance of friendship and the love of family. These things are important, not social status. It might be argued that the bad changes that affected Pip were not entirely the fault of the society in which he lived; it might also be an indication of a fault within him. We will look at this point again a little later.

Another key social conflict is the legal system. Magwitch, after committing innumerable petty crimes, mostly theft, is understood to be incorrigible and unlikely to ever live a crime-free life, and so is exiled for life. At that time Great Britain would transport some criminals to Australia. In previous years, they had sent criminals to other colonies; Georgia, for example, started as a penal colony. Magwitch's exile affects his life greatly. First, he apparently lived a law-abiding life in Australia and became quite rich through his own honest efforts. In this way, we might see him being finally rehabilitated. But it is also this system of exile that ultimately leads to Magwitch's death. He could not stay away from what he considered his best deed, the creation of a young lord from a poor orphan.

Characters Against Themselves

Finally, the last category of conflict is when characters must struggle against themselves. This is, in a way, perhaps the most common type of conflict. In a general way, most modern novels center around character development. The main character, and perhaps some of the more minor characters as well, change during the course of most novels or short stories. And character development, the process through which a character recognizes shortcomings and struggles to overcome them, can be seen as internal conflict.

There are a couple of major examples of this type of conflict in *Great Expectations*. We have mentioned them briefly above. Pip loves Estella against all reason, against everything he knows about her character and habits, and against what she tells him repeatedly about herself. He recognizes that she is cruel and, in fact, has been trained to be cruel. He recognizes that she does not care for him. Yet he carries on loving her and dreaming of being with her eventually. This is a struggle with himself.

The other internal conflict we mentioned with which Pip struggles is the effect of the gift of a large quantity of money he receives. This money causes Pip to think of himself as being essentially better than almost everyone who does not have that money, and this includes his very good friend and adoptive father, Joe. Joe's loving character is made very clear, and his quality as a human being is obvious. However, Pip ignores and forgets it and is only embarrassed by him. Learning to look beyond things such as how much money one has is a significant struggle for Pip. He sees this flaw in others and makes fun of the way shopkeepers

and others suddenly treat him so much better when he becomes rich. However, he does not see this flaw in himself until the money has been lost.

An End to Conflict

Conflict by itself, without end or resolution, would not be satisfying. The point of introducing conflict into a story is to demonstrate how the character deals with that challenge. The conflict is not always resolved in a happy way, but it must always be resolved. Let us look briefly at some of the resolutions from *Great Expectations*.

Pip's struggles with nature are minor, and they are relatively easily overcome. Pip does ultimately find his way through the fog to find "his" convict. He does not lose his boat to the tides in the Thames. He merely leaves his boat downriver until he is able to arrange for it to be brought back to the dock near his apartment.

Pip's conflicts with many of the people in his village who were not nice to him when he was a child are resolved by the mere fact that he does not return to his village for any extended period of time. His conflict with Mrs. Joe, his sister, ends when she is attacked. She could no longer attack him, and he could only feel sorry for her condition (though he never fully forgave her). His conflict with Bidley and Joe are resolved in a positive way. Though he is not able to marry Bidley, he does make his peace with her and Joe and reconstructs a happy relationship with them both. He ultimately resolves his conflict with Miss Havisham as well. This is mostly brought about by an internal change that occurs in her when she finally realizes what she had done to both Estella and, through her, Pip. He also resolves his conflict with his benefactor. When Magwitch first returns to Great Britain to introduce himself to Pip, Pip is quite horrified by him. This was due both to the further dashing of Pip's hopes concerning Estella as well as the natural horror of being closely involved with a criminal. By the end of the story, Pip's ideas about many people have changed.

The resolution of Pip's conflicts with society—mostly stemming from an improper overvaluation of money and class and a disregard for a person's internal qualities—come about through a change within himself. Society does not change. Pip learns to depend less on society's rules for judging oneself and others. In the end, he overcomes his conflict with society by moving out of it in some ways. We see this in his acceptance of Magwitch. Pip recognizes his benefactor's qualities and does not concern himself with class—Magwitch's or his own.

And so, the resolution of many of the conflicts in the book is really the product of a single conflict resolution, Pip's conflict against himself (his internal conflict). Pip learns the lesson that some things are important and some things are not. He learns to value internal qualities, both in himself and in those people around him, and not their position in society. That position, as he has learned from his own time in the upper classes, is not really based on anything important. It is based on the amount of money one has, and that is certainly not a measure of how good a person is.

But what of the resolution of the conflict between Pip and Estella? The Signet publication of this book, the version you have just read, provides an interesting opportunity. Two different endings of this story are provided, and we can decide for ourselves which is better. They both address the conflict between Pip and Estella, but do it in very different ways. In the first ending Dickens wrote, Pip and Estella do not end up together. However, Dickens' friends urged him to change that ending, arguing that it would be much more satisfying for his readers if the book ended happily (or happily in a different way) with Pip's longtime longing and love for Estella repaid by being requited by Estella. In some ways, this seems the weaker ending. The main resolution of the rest of the conflicts in the book involved Pip learning to value the good in other people. We are told repeatedly that there is little good left in Estella (though perhaps through no fault of her own), and so this might be another area where Pip should have changed his mind about people. But in the ending in which Pip and Estella end up together, Pip pines away for Estella for eleven years after her marriage, and ten or more before it. He does not learn the same lesson in regard to Estella that he learned everywhere else. In the other ending, though, the ending in which he does see her again but without that sense of loss, he has left his love for her behind along with his other unhealthy notions. This ending shows that Pip makes a more complete transformation when he learns his lesson. The last line of that ending in which they end up together could almost be, "And they lived happily ever after." Like a fairy tale, this does not sound all that realistic. The ending in which they do not end up together might conclude with the sentence, "And he truly had learned his lesson." It is up to you to decide which ending is more satisfying to you.



WRITING EXERCISES

1. Write a paper discussing the two different endings of *Great Expectations*. Explain their differences and why you prefer one more than the other.
2. Relate the story of a conflict you have experienced or witnessed. Tell us what happened and how the conflict was resolved. You can choose any of the four types of conflict discussed above.
3. Choose one of the characters from *Great Expectations* other than Pip. Write a paper describing an internal struggle you feel that character experiences during the course of the events of this story.
4. Write four brief summaries of conflicts you have had. Devote just one paragraph to each description and include descriptions of all four types of conflicts examined in this lesson.
5. Choose a character from any other book you have read in the last couple of years. In a page or two, describe one of the key conflicts that character faced and resolved.
6. Make up a character and write a brief short story (no more than a couple of pages or so) in which that character faces a conflict and resolves it.